



Paraglide

Bragg officials warn speeders to slow down

Story, by Lucille Anne Newman

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Fort Bragg military police statistics report that more than 637 accidents have occurred on post since January. According to these statistics, speeding contributes to 80 to 85 percent of motor vehicle accidents.

There have been recent fatalities on post due to speed, said Staff Sgt. Edwin Wilhoit, 42nd Military Police Detachment, Traffic Enforcement Unit noncommissioned officer in charge. "People on this installation really need to slow down."

Wilhoit said many of the Soldiers caught speeding were stopped in the morning hours before physical training. "People are speeding because they are worried about missing formation and get behind because of traffic," Wilhoit said. "(We see speeding) especially on Gruber Road. People just don't seem to understand that the speed limit in that area is 25 mph. (Speeding) is to the point that almost every (patrol) vehicle now has a radar in it, and sooner or later speeders will get caught."

Wilhoit said if a driver is caught speeding on Fort Bragg, the following actions will occur:

- The driver will receive a speeding ticket and will be required to attend a defensive-driving course held every Saturday on Fort Bragg.
- The driver's name is printed on a blotter, which is read by his chain of command.
- If a Soldier receives a ticket and refuses to attend the defensive-driving course, the garrison commander can revoke his on-post driving privileges.
- If caught driving on post with suspended privileges, the person is subject to arrest.
- If taken into custody, the individual will be taken to the MP station where they will fill out paperwork and be returned to their unit for disciplinary action.

Wilhoit said drivers who ignore traffic signals or posted signs are often the cause of accidents.

"When an accident occurs as a result of speeding, the first thing a patrol officer will do is see if a driver comes forward and admits the accident is their fault. If either party denies that they are at fault and the reports given are in conflict of each other, a traffic investigator will examine both vehicles to determine how fast either vehicle was going by

examining the physical evidence at the scene,” said Sgt. David Doerr, 42nd MP Det., Traffic Enforcement unit.

He said the physical evidence he looks for when mapping out an accident is skid marks and debris patterns.

“(We look at) physical evidence from where the vehicles are sitting, the points of impact and the area that got hit, and anything that can determine who was at fault,” Wilhoit said. “If someone was injured (the pieces of evidence) can determine how fast each vehicle was going.”

Doerr said most of the accidents he has investigated have been due to distracted drivers.

“If I could tell anyone anything, it’s that they need to pay attention while driving,” Doerr said. “All the accidents that I’ve (seen) have been caused by people not paying attention. (For example) talking on a cell phone - it’s becoming more prevalent, and due to the high volume of traffic on Fort Bragg, it’s an additional distraction.”

He said another huge problem is drivers who are driving while fatigued, which is just as bad as driving while intoxicated.

“A lot of soldiers returning from a deployment are in such a hurry to go home to see their loved ones that they end up speeding,” Doerr said. “Some (were in such a hurry) that they did not wear their seatbelts and that’s how the 82nd Airborne Division ended up with more than three accidents, three fatalities and three serious injuries within 72 hours.”